

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 EB-11 AGR-20 OMB-01 CIEP-03 DRC-01

/147 W

----- 115269

R 191026Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 444

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

/CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6446

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH KING

SUMMARY: THE AMBASSADORS WHO ATTENDED THE ANNUAL CANOE RACES IN LUANG PRABANG ON AUGUST 17TH WERE GRANTED AUDIENCES WITH THE KING. IN THE COURSE OF MY TWENTY MINUTE TALK WITH HIM THE KING DISCUSSED WATERGATE, AMERICAN AID, SOUVANNA'S ILLNESS AND PATHET LAO ATTITUDES. END SUMMARY.

1. AT A BALL FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL PIROGUE RACES AT LUANG PRABANG THE KING TALKED FOR ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES WITH EACH OF THE AMBASSADORS PRESENT. AS THESE AUDIENCES WERE HELD IN A CORNER OF THE BALLROOM IN WHICH A VERY NOISY BAND WAS PLAYING AND GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE KING'S SPEECH IMPEDIMENT MAKES HIM HARD TO UNDERSTAND UNDER THE BEST OF CURCUMSTANCES, MY COLLEAGUES AND I SHARE SOME DOUBTS REGARDING OUR COMPREHENSION OF WHAT HE ACTUALLY SAID TO EACH OF US. THE FOLLOWING IS WHAT I COULD MAKE OUT.

2. THE KING SAID HE HAD BEEN FOLLOWING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S. WITH GREAT INTEREST. WATERGATE
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HAD BEEN A MOST EXTRAORDINARY EPISODE AND IT WAS UNFOR-

TUNATE (TRISTE) THAT PRESIDENT NIXON SHOULD HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RESIGN AS A RESULT OF ACTIVITIES WHICH APPEARED TO BE UNNECESSARY. THE KING SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT PRESIDENT FORD WOULD PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. HE HAD HAD THE PLEASURE OF KNOWING ALL THE PRESIDENTS OF THE U.S. SINCE PRESIDENT TRUMAN. HE WAS INTERESTED TO SEE WHO WOULD NOW BE PICKED TO BECOME VICE-PRESIDENT. HE WONDERED WHETHER GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER OR SENATOR GOLDWATER WOULD BE SELECTED.

3. I REPLIED THAT I SENSED GREAT RELIEF AT HOME THAT WATERGATE WAS OVER. I DREW ATTENTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO THE CONGRESS EMPHASIZING THE CONSTANCY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND I OPINED THAT THE PRESIDENT SEEMED TO HAVE MANY PERSONS UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY.

4. THE KING SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THE MAINTENANCE OF CORDIAL AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN LAOS AND THE U.S. LAOS WAS GRATEFUL FOR AID RECEIVED BUT FRIENDSHIP OUTWEIGHED ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. AMERICA HAD BEEN THROUGH A CRISIS BUT THE PRESENT CRISIS IN LAOS CAUSED BY THE ILLNESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER WAS FAR MORE DRAMATIC. I EXPRESSED REGRET OVER THE PRIME MINISTER'S HEART ATTACK NOTING THAT HE WAS MAKING AN EXTRAORDINARILY GOOD RECOVERY. THE KING SAID SOMETHING TO THE EFFECT THAT SOUVANNA WAS INDISPENSABLE. I AGREED ADDING THAT HIS ABSENCE MIGHT LEAD TO FURTHER DELAYS IN ACHIEVING NATIONAL RECONCILIATION A WARRIVING THING TO ME IN RECENT MONTHS HAD BEEN THE DEPTH OF THE SUSPICION AND MISTRUST OF THE U.S. HARBORED BY THE PATHET LAO. AT THIS THE KING BECAME MORE ANIMATED AND SAID THAT THIS WORRIED HIM ALSO. INDEED HE HAD TOLD SEVERAL OF THOSE GENTLEMEN THAT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. WAS UNGRACIOUS AND ILL-ADVISED. THEY SHOULD REALIZE THAT THE VERY RICE THEY ATE WAS PROVIDED BY THE AMERICANS AND IT WAS CONTRARY TO LAO TRADITION TO BE ILL-MANNERED AND UNGRATEFUL. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THESE REMARKS. THE KING SAID HE HAD ENJOYED OUR TALK AND CONFIDENTIAL

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HE WISHED HE HAD MORE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. WITH THAT THE AUDIENCE ENDED.

5. I SUBSEQUENTLY CHATTED WITH SOUPHANOUVONG WHOSE THEME WAS THE NECESSITY OF LAOS BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT IN RICE AND PHOUMI WHO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER ALLEGED PLOTTING BY THE VIENTIANE SIDE BUT WAS SMILING AND

FRIENDLY AS USUAL.
WHITTEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KING, PERSONAL OPINION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974VIENTI06446
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740227-1017
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740835/aaaabdx.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Aug-2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <03 MAR 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH KING SUMMARY: THE AMBASSADORS WHO ATTENDED THE ANNUAL CANOE
TAGS: PFOR, LA, (SAVANG VATTHANA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005